



### **SB 938 An Act Concerning Unemployment Benefits for Striking Workers**

### **HB 5854 An Act Concerning the Number of Wage and Hour Inspectors at the Labor Department**

Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, Ranking Members, and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Jody Barr and I am the Executive Director of AFSCME Council 4 which represents 30,000 public and private sector workers including the dedicated workers at the Department of Labor.

I am here to testify in support of SB 938, An Act Concerning Unemployment Benefits for Striking Workers which would provide unemployment benefits for striking workers after a short waiting period. When workers decide to go on strike it is often the last option available during a labor dispute with management. Often workers are bullied into a strike by management that is trying to instigate a strike. It is not a decision that workers take lightly. Unemployment compensation pays far less than a worker's normal wage, so this bill is not an enticement to strike. Currently, when workers go on strike they are not eligible to collect unemployment. SB 938 corrects this and recognizes that if workers are able to collect unemployment after two weeks then they would likely work to resolve a labor dispute. This can also be administered through the DOL using current resources they already have and would allow for unemployment benefits to be processed in a timely manner. We urge you to support SB 938. New York and New Jersey have both passed laws allowing striking workers to get unemployment compensation.

I am also here to testify in support of HB 5854, An Act Concerning the Number of Wage and Hour Inspectors at the Labor Department. Most state employee and municipal employee jobs are understaffed. We urge the Governor and Legislature to fully staff all public employee positions. Department of Labor wage and hour inspectors are vastly understaffed. These inspectors protect workers from being stolen from. Wage theft is endemic these days. Our members in the Department of Labor do important work for the state of Connecticut despite being understaffed. This bill would help that by requiring a minimum of forty-five wage and hour inspectors at DOL. Wage and hour inspectors provide an important service that ensures businesses are on a level playing field. These workers investigate complaints when businesses are exploiting workers and levies fines so that businesses who do the wrong thing are held

accountable. By having more wage and hour inspectors it would allow DOL to better investigate complaints made by workers. I urge the committee to support HB 5854.

Thank you.